

Fertile City Council Minutes July 11, 2022

The Fertile City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, July 11, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were Mayor Daniel Wilkens, and Council members Matthew Massmann and Mary Kiefert. Also present was City Administrator Lisa Liden, Public Works Director Kevin Nephew, Fair Meadow Nursing Home Administrator Angie Leiting, and Twylla Altepeter with the Fertile Journal. Present also were Craig Engelstad and Valerie Hill.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Wilkens at 6:30 p.m. and began with those present reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Under agenda approval, Mayor Wilkens asked to add cemetery plot pricing. The agenda as amended was approved on a motion by Council member Massmann that was seconded by Council member Kiefert and carried.

There were no public comments.

The minutes of the June 13, 2022 were approved as presented on a motion by Council member Kiefert that was seconded by Council member Massmann and was carried.

City Administrator Lisa Liden gave the Treasurer's Report. Liden went over the out of the ordinary deposits and checks for the month of June. Under the deposits Liden noted that it was a good month with property taxes received as well as the second half of the City's American Recovery Act funds. There was also an airport project reimbursement for over \$44,000. The fire department had also given a check for deposit for their truck fund. Under the check listing Liden noted that disbursements were also high for the month with checks to Agassiz Asphalt for the final payment on the airport project, payment to Brock White for the crack sealing materials, a payment to Eide Bailly for the audit, and check to the fire department for \$20,000 to be deposited into their truck fund. The balance sheet, profit and loss, and budget to actual reports were also briefly reviewed.

The Treasurer's Report was approved on a motion by Council member Massmann that was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

Under the airport report it was noted by Kevin Nephew, Public Works Director, that he still needed to trim the two trees that had been marked as obstructions. Mayor Wilkens noted that once those were trimmed another flight check would be done by the Federal Aviation Administration.

There was no City Engineer report.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting gave the report for Fair Meadow Nursing Home. The month of June began and ended with 40 residents, operating at 90.31% capacity. They had also served 161 home delivered meals.

In reviewing the profit and loss reports, Leiting reported that for the month of June there was a combined total loss of over \$33,000 with the nursing home showing a loss of \$37,000 and the assisted living showing a profit of almost \$2,700. For the year-to-date profit and loss Leiting noted that the year-to-date report wouldn't export properly so she had to scan and email the report so it

wasn't broken out between the nursing home and assisted living. For the year to date, the nursing home and assisted living showed a loss of over \$308,000 and Leiting noted the entire loss was attributed to the nursing home and the assisted living was showing a small profit. For the budget to actual comparison, income was about at the target amount and expenses for the nursing home and assisted living were higher than the target.

Mayor Wilkens asked why the nursing home loss was so high and Leiting responded that it was due primarily to the high costs of temp staff and also due to the fact that they still had not received their rate increase for 2022. Council member Massmann asked what nursing homes were doing to survive with high operating costs. Leiting stated that they had received an estimate on the higher rates and that they would bill out for private pay residents at a rate slightly lower than the new estimate back to January. Leiting also said that they were still waiting for six months payment for one resident since there was a holdup on the paperwork with Polk County.

After further discussion of the holdup on county paperwork, Leiting moved on to discussion of the dual training grant that the nursing home had received. She reported that 13 employees would be going to college to get either their LPN or RN licensure. Fair Meadow would have to pay tuition each semester and then submit for reimbursement. Leiting was concerned about the effect this would have on cash flow while waiting for reimbursement, so she had talked to the bank about issuing warrants to cover the tuition costs. Leiting asked for Council approval on the warrants.

Council member Massmann asked what the financial ramifications would be for the nursing home if an employee dropped out of school under the program. Leiting explained that there would be no ramifications for the nursing home since the home was reimbursed 100% within a month of tuition payment.

Council member Massmann made a motion to approve getting a warrant at the bank to cover tuition costs under the dual training grant program up to \$102,000. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

Leiting gave a brief report on the golf tournament that had been held as a fundraiser for the Fair Meadow Foundation. Enough money had been raised to purchase a new tub for the nursing home.

Leiting reported next that Tammy Radermacher had put in her notice for the Assisted Living and would be continuing to work as infection preventionist for the nursing home. According to the guidelines, the infection preventionist had to be in the nursing home and her current office was in the assisted living. The Director of Nursing also needed to move her office back to the one that Leiting now occupied since her current office was located in a high activity area that made her work difficult.

The end result was that Leiting would need to move her office again and the only office that was available was just inside the assisted living. Since Council had asked that she move her office to the nursing home in response to an employee survey, Leiting would like Council approval to move back to the assisted living. Mayor Wilkens asked City Administrator Liden to arrange for a Personnel Committee meeting to discuss the matter.

Director of Public Works, Kevin Nephew, was next to give his report and he began by reporting that the crack sealing and divot filling projects were done. Council member Massmann asked how long the crack sealing usually lasts and Nephew said that it's good for 8 to 10 years. He explained further that the focus for crack sealing this year was on the new roads, like the Nature Center road, that

hadn't been done yet. He noted that they still had two pallets of product left. As for the divot filling, Nephew noted that he would like them to come back next year to do a few more streets. Mayor Wilkens asked how the Nature Center road was for cracks and Nephew said it wasn't really too bad. Wilkens then inquired about the holes that had been appearing in the bridge and Nephew said that he had filled them in with tar and it was holding.

Kevin Nephew asked City Administrator Liden if she had received an email from the Sand Hill River Watershed yet about potential help with the eroding river bank at the Learning Center. Liden responded that she had not yet gotten an email about it but that she would watch for it. A brief discussion was held regarding the erosion problem and where it was located. The problem has been ongoing for several years and at least a couple of times funding had been sought to assist with fixing the issue but those efforts had been unsuccessful.

Kevin Nephew reported that they had begun work on replacing the shattered dasher boards at the rink with treated plywood. The edges of the plywood would be painted at the shop before they were installed at the rink.

Mayor Wilkens then asked about the sewer problem at the corner of Highway 32 and Garfield Avenue that had caused a back up during the fair. Nephew figured the back up was due to a combination of the grease issue from the Smokehouse and high water use during the Polk County Fair. They had cleaned out the blockage on Saturday and again on Monday morning. Nephew noted that they would have that section of sewer televised this fall when J & R Wastewater came to do their annual line flushing.

Under the Learning Center, discussion was held on the building expansion that the City had received funding for from Polk County. Administrator Liden explained that the County Attorney was working on the agreement that the City would need to sign to get the funding. The Learning Center board would look at establishing a committee to work on the layout of the addition which would include a handicap accessible restroom.

Discussion moved to the item under new business regarding an addition to the Nature Center Shop. Administrator Liden explained that the current shop wasn't large enough to accommodate the new grooming equipment that the City had gotten with a grant through the Department of Natural Resources. According to the terms of the grant, the equipment must be stored indoors in a secure, dry location. In addition to the space issues with the current shop, the roof was also leaking and rodents were an issue.

Mayor Wilkens explained the plan that the Learning Center Board had worked on that included an 18-foot lean-to on the east side of the building. The addition would ideally include a drive-in door and a walk-through door. Council member Massmann asked what the current roof was made of and Mayor Wilkens explained that it was a sheet metal roof and it appeared to be leaking at the holes where the roof material was nailed to the rafters.

Discussion was held on the shop expansion and Craig Engelstad who was present for the Learning Center Board and Mayor Wilkens explained that the current roof and rafters would be removed and replaced with rafters that would span the current shop and addition. That way the side walls of the addition would be the same height as the current shop and would allow for better storage. The current east wall would be maintained so there would be separation between the old shop and new

addition. Discussion was also held on whether the floor would be concrete or dirt. The benefit of concrete would be potentially sealing the entire building to keep mice out.

Craig Engelstad added that there would soon be a site committee meeting with Learning Center Board members and City staff to discuss site management issues such as mowing and trail maintenance. Mayor Wilkens added that the agreement between the Learning Center and City might have to be amended to include more clear language on who is responsible for what as far as trail maintenance.

There were no reports for the Fire Department or Personnel Committees.

The next item up for discussion under new business was the American Recovery Act Funds that that City had just received. Discussion was held on whether the funds should be given to Fair Meadow Nursing Home to help cover their increased costs due to Covid and high staffing costs. It was decided to wait and see whether or not they would need the funds closer to the month of October when they would again have to cover three payrolls.

The next item to be discussed was the price of cemetery plots at Pleasant Hill Cemetery. Mayor Wilkens reported that an individual on the Concordia Cemetery Board had spoken with him and informed him that Concordia had just raised their plot prices to \$250 and they would like it if the City would do the same. Administrator Liden reported that the current plot price was \$150.

A motion was made by Council member Massmann to raise the price of cemetery plots to \$250. The motion was seconded by Council member Kiefert and was carried.

The final item discussed was the safeTALK training that was being arranged to be held at the Community Center in August. The training addressed suicide prevention and teaching others how to reach out to people and talk to them if there appeared to be a suicide risk. Mayor Wilkens noted that there had been discussion of the training at the mental health forum that had been held in June. With the number of suicides that had happened in the area over the past few years, Wilkens felt it was important to get the safeTALK training offered in Fertile. He urged everybody on Council and City staff to attend the training. Discussion was held on the four potential dates for the training and what date would work best.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m. on a motion by Council member Massmann.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator